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## THE DEMONOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

### I.

OF late years the textual criticism of the New Testament has made much progress in this country, and especially in Oxford and Cambridge innumerable manuscripts have been collected and classified ; the great lines along which the tradition has flowed are being ascertained, and even referred to the countries of their origin. The Diatessaron is restored to us, and little by little the external evidence of the Gospels is pushed back deep into the second century. That is one main result gained, and another equally notable is the recognition on all sides that however much inspired by God these writings may be, their transmission to us has at any rate been controlled by the same laws as govern the transmission of any other, and purely human, documents.

But the criticism of the contents of the New Testament has not made equal progress. Isolated thinkers indeed have made attempts to *humanize* the life and personality of Jesus, to show that there is really nothing about the history of the early Church which justifies us in lifting it out of general history and claiming for its documents a right to be tested by other tests of probability than those which we apply to secular narratives. But in the bosom of orthodox Christian sects such efforts have met with little or no response. To be an authority on the history of the sacred text is held to excuse

a scholar's reluctance to grapple with the ideas which are its content and underlie the narrative. Now I believe that we cannot understand these wonderful narratives except in so far as we can reconstruct the *mind* and intellectual habits of those who wrote them, and of those about whom they were written. We must try to breathe the atmosphere which they breathed, even though in working back to it we inhale more than we care to of the dust of ages. No other course is compatible with a real respect for the Christian religion, than to try to understand it as part and parcel of the great process in which man reveals himself to himself—as a great, perhaps, even as a culminating, manifestation of the human spirit. This is rationalism in its true sense. Let us then emulate St. Paul, who wrote thus: “I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all; howbeit, in the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

We honour Christianity but cheaply, when we draw a ring-fence around the person of its founder, and employ for the study of his character and actions, as related in the New Testament, methods and canons which we should repudiate in any other field of research.

In this century educated men have so generally abandoned the beliefs in a personal devil and in possession by evil spirits, that the Demonology of the New Testament is a most favourable subject-matter, the which to discuss from a newer and more critical standpoint. Jesus, his disciples, and all the New Testament writers had a profound and vigorous belief in the Devil and in evil spirits: and I venture to outline their opinion as follows.

The origin of evil spirits in a movement of rebellion against God on the part of certain of his angels is assumed in the New Testament as a matter of common knowledge. “I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven,” says Jesus in Luke’s Gospel<sup>1</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 18.

addressing the seventy, when they returned to him with joy, because of their discovery that even the devils were subject to them through his name. We have fuller information from Jude, who knew of angels which kept not their first estate, but left their proper habitation<sup>1</sup>; from the author of 2 Peter, who says that God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell<sup>2</sup>. This is all we can glean from the New Testament about their origin. About

Their ac- their present haunts, their activity in regard to  
tivities. mankind, and about the future that awaits them, the New Testament is more explicit. The author of 2 Peter and Jude believed that God reserves them for judgment, bound in dungeons of darkness<sup>3</sup>. The Lord reserves them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day<sup>4</sup>. The demons, the ministers of Satan, themselves know what is in store for them, and this is why they cried, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us *before the time*<sup>5</sup>?" And from the same Gospel of Matthew we learn that for the Devil and his angels everlasting fire is prepared, into which the Son of Man at his glorious second coming will cast them along with the cursed among men<sup>6</sup>.

For Satan, the Devil, the adversary, heads a counter-  
They rule kingdom of evil opposed to the kingdom of God,  
the world. and the lost angels are his messengers and instruments<sup>7</sup>. With an absoluteness, hardly less than that of Marcion, the apostles John and Paul insist on the entire subordination of this world to Satan. He is, according to the former, the prince or ruler of this world (*ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*)<sup>8</sup>, in whose casting out the world itself is judged. And Paul calls him outright the *god of this world*. In the legend of the temptation of Jesus, all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them are in Satan's gift.

<sup>1</sup> Jude 6.<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 4.<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 4.<sup>4</sup> Jude 6.<sup>5</sup> Matt. viii. 29.<sup>6</sup> Matt. xxv. 41.<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 7; Matt. ix. 34.<sup>8</sup> John xii. 31; xiv. 30; and xvi. 11.

Since he was ruler and god of this world, it could hardly be otherwise.

Although, according to Peter and Jude, bound in darkness with everlasting chains, the devils and their leader, according to the New Testament writers, nevertheless possess great facilities for moving about. Thus, Paul held not only the Talmudic belief that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light<sup>1</sup>, but also the Persian belief that he is prince of the power of the air<sup>2</sup>. "We wrestle not," he says, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers . . . against the wicked spirits in the heavens." Not that they did not also haunt the earth; for Jesus believed that evil spirits prefer to walk through waterless places when they are seeking rest.

As to their composition, we may perhaps infer from Their com-  
position. St. Luke<sup>3</sup> that they could not be handled, nor had flesh and bones, yet that they appeared to the eye. So also Paul<sup>4</sup> expressly denies flesh and blood to the demon adversaries with whom he and his followers wrestled. But though they were thus immaterial, Paul believed that they could be warded off and their evil influences neutralized by so material a screen as the Chalebi or traditional headdress of the Jewish women. For this, as Dean Farrar (*Life of Christ*, Appendix VIII), admits, is the true meaning of Paul's rule, that women should veil themselves in church "because of the angels."

The word *δαιμόνιον* is commonly used in the sense of evil spirits; *δαίμων* is less frequent. *Πνεῦμα* with the Terms for  
evil spirit. epithets "unclean," *ἀκάθαρτον*, or "evil," *πονηρόν*, is very frequent. Sometimes the expression *πνεῦμα δαίμονος* occurs, literally "the blowing of the Demon." For the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 2, and vi. 12.

<sup>3</sup> In Luke xxiv. 37 it is not said that the apostles thought the risen Christ to be an evil spirit, though they were "terrified and affrighted." Anyhow, it was as mere spirits, whether good or bad, that he could not be handled nor presumably eat. *Πνεῦμα* so used in the New Testament is, apart from moral qualities, the same sort of agency as *δαιμόνιον*.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. vi. 12; 1 Cor. xi. 10.

New Testament writers believed that the physical constitution of a spirit, whether holy or impure, was akin to moving vapour; and so, in John xx. 22, the risen Jesus communicates the Holy Ghost to the disciples by *blowing* on them. True it was the Holy Spirit so imparted, and not an unclean spirit; but it must be remarked that, apart from moral ends and considerations, the Holy Spirit gave rise in those whom it inspired just the same physical manifestations as did the unclean spirits.

Let us examine a few passages illustrating this important point. We read in Luke how at the baptism in Jordan the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus, in bodily form like a dove. Justin, quoting some early form of Gospel, says (*Dialog.* 315 D) that it flew and alighted on him (*ἐπιπῆναι ἐπ' αὐτόν*). And in the Ebionite Gospel, as reported by Epiphanius (*Haer.* xxx. 13), the dove came down and entered actually *into* Jesus (*περιστερᾶς κατελθούσης καὶ εἰσελθούσης εἰς αὐτόν*). That in some early acts of martyrs (e. g. Polycarp's), a dove leaves the saint's body at death and flutters aloft, is proof of the antiquity of this belief that the spirit, in a dove's form, not merely alighted *on* Jesus, but passed *into* him. In precisely similar manner the evil spirits passed from the Gadarene demoniac's body into the bodies of the swine. And the conceptions of spiritual agency which underlie this well-authenticated story must be admitted to belong to a common circle of materialistic ideas with this Ebionite legend of the Holy Spirit. Again, the Holy Spirit *fell* bodily upon those that heard the word (*ἐπέπεσε*)<sup>1</sup>. The spirit of the Lord displayed the same faculty of material constraint, when it caught away (*ἤρπασε*) Philip<sup>2</sup> and, it would seem, transferred him in a miraculous and invisible fashion to Azotus. Similarly in a fragment of the Hebrew Gospel preserved by Jerome, Jesus avers that his mother, the Holy Spirit, caught him up by the hair of his head and lifted him (Comm. in Mich. c. 7, 5-7: in Ezech. xvi.

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Acts viii. 39.

13). Perhaps such an opinion also underlies Mark i. 12, where it is related that straightway (after the baptism) the Spirit *drove* (ἐκβάλλει) Jesus forth into the wilderness. The same intrusion on the physical order of things constantly *marks the approach of evil spirits*. Thus the dumb spirit, where-soever it took the man's son, it tare him down, so that he foamed again and gnashed with his teeth, and pined away<sup>1</sup>. And Luke relates of the same spirit that, "bruising" the child, it hardly departed from him.

The Gadarene, similarly, would break his bonds and be driven of the Devil into the wilderness. And the same Gadarene devils drove the swine, in which they were allowed to take refuge, down a steep place into the sea.

Demons, like Holy Spirit, use voice of one possessed.

Lastly, it is illustrative of the power of physical constraint ascribed to demons, that the vocal organs of one possessed were controlled by the demon which had over-mastered him. It was not the man that spake, but the devil within him. "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," said Jesus to the unclean spirit in Mark i. 25; and when the spirit had torn him and *cried with a loud voice*, he came out of him. In the same context<sup>2</sup>, and in Luke<sup>3</sup>, we read that devils came out of many, crying out and saying, "Thou art Christ, the Son of God." But Jesus suffered not the devils to *speak*, because they knew him. In the later age of Clement of Alexandria the demons could not always make themselves understood, for he speaks of a special dialect or language spoken by possessed persons (δαιμονιζόμενοι, Clem. Al. lib. i. 338). In Acts xvi. 16 we read of a girl having a spirit of divination, whose soothsaying brought her masters much gain. Now the Holy Spirit within a man equally took possession of his voice; but whereas the demons spoke articulately, the Holy Spirit seems to have generally expressed itself in a stream of incoherent and unintelligible utterances. This is evidenced by more than one passage in Paul's Epistles. "If I pray in a tongue,"

<sup>1</sup> Mark ix. 18; Luke ix. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Luke iv. 34.

says Paul, "my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful<sup>1</sup>." This gift accordingly was so little for the edification of others, that Paul made the rule, "that if there be no interpreter, then let him that hath this peculiar gift of the Holy Spirit keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God<sup>2</sup>." Not that the utterances of the spirit were ever thus unintelligible; for Jesus bade his disciples to take no thought how or what they should speak, when for his sake they should be brought before governors and kings<sup>3</sup>. "For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of the father which speaketh in you." Perhaps, however, it is to force language, if we should reckon this as a case of possession by the Holy Spirit, and so as similar to the phenomena dwelt upon by Paul.

With Satan and his demons lies the ultimate responsibility for human sin. Satan is the tempter, the evil one from whom Jesus taught his followers to pray to be delivered. He sows the tares<sup>4</sup> that choke the true seed's growth. He tempted even the Messiah, and he perpetually seeks to ensnare all men. He entered into Judas, and prompted him to betray his master<sup>5</sup>. The Jews who heard not Jesus, had for their father the Devil<sup>6</sup>. "The lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh his own: for he is a liar, the father of it." But though men thus have supernatural enemies who lead them into sin, they will none the less be cast into the furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth<sup>7</sup>, as the penalty of having yielded to this domination. Human responsibility is thus assumed in the New Testament, though how it is to be reconciled with the forcible and *ab extra* character of the evil one's assaults upon man is not explained. In records so naïve we could

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. x. 18, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xiii. 25.

<sup>5</sup> John xiii. 2 and 27.

<sup>6</sup> John viii. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xiii. 42.



not expect it to be. The same hierarchy of evil spirits is responsible also for death and disease. The inspirer of sin is indirectly the author of death<sup>1</sup>, the last enemy whom the Messiah will destroy. And Satan's demons inflict on those of whose persons they take possession all forms of sickness, mental and bodily.

Let us enumerate the various categories of evil spirits.

There were, firstly, the unclean spirits: such  
 Classifica-  
 tion of  
 Demons of  
 Possession.  
 were the Gadarene devils which drove forth their victim to dwell in the tombs<sup>2</sup>. Their

nature could be discerned from their favourite resorts. No pure spirit would frequent the neighbourhood of dead bodies. And to this day a Jewish priest may not view a corpse. Such unclean demons were held to be the restless souls of wicked men who had died; and this is why they were so often fierce and untameable; in such wise that the victims of their oppression required to be bound with chains. Others were devils of blindness, or of blindness and dumbness together<sup>3</sup>; others were simply dumb, or dumb and deaf together. In some cases the dumb spirit was also a violent one; e.g. in Mark<sup>4</sup> a parent appeals to Jesus, whose son had a dumb spirit. And where-soever he led him he tore him; and the boy foamed, and gnashed with his teeth, and pined away. There were also fever demons, and Luke ascribes the "great fever<sup>5</sup>," from which Simon's wife's mother suffered, to a demon. For Jesus, he says, "stood over her, and *rebuked* the fever; and it left her." Other spirits were merely of weakness or infirmity. So in Luke<sup>6</sup>, we hear of a woman "which had a spirit of infirmity (*ἀσθενείας*) for eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up." And the seven evil spirits of Mary Magdalene were infirmities, or—more correctly—her several infirmities were demons. It is clear that to the mind of Luke the physician, if not in the opinion of Jesus also, fever and rheumatism were cases

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Mark v. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Mark ix. 17; Luke ix. 39.

<sup>5</sup> Luke iv. 38, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xiii. 11.

of possession. The two first synoptists, however, especially Matthew, tend to confine possession to madness. Indeed, Matthew<sup>1</sup> expressly identifies epilepsy or lunacy with possession. Σεληνιάζεται καὶ κακῶς πάσχει, says the father kneeling before Jesus, who forthwith "rebuked the devil." Peter<sup>2</sup> believed that all those whom Jesus healed were "oppressed of the Devil."

There was no limit to the number of demons that could possess one and the same man. Thus the lunatic of Gadara had so many devils within him that they declared their name to be legion<sup>3</sup>; for devils had their own names, and Jesus was careful to ask what it was. It was of common occurrence for one person to be possessed by several devils at once; and so we read of the seven devils or evil spirits which Jesus cast out of Mary Magdalene<sup>4</sup>. And in this context we may note how common it was for devils to go about in sevens. The unclean spirit, when he is gone out of a man, goes back with seven others that he found walking in the waterless places. In Revelations the spirits of God are also seven in antithesis<sup>5</sup>, and seven in number, as we shall see later on, were the characteristic spirits of Belial.

Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, believed in another and fresh mode of demoniac activity, never referred to in the Gospels. The gods of the heathen were devils, i.e. really supernatural beings exercising their powers and knowledge for sinister aims. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to *devils*, and not to God," is his emphatic statement<sup>6</sup>. The tendency of this passage is unmistakable, and it is in connexion with it that we must explain the words which come earlier<sup>7</sup> in the same Epistle, that "an idol is nothing in the world." This refers to the wooden or stone images only. The gods and goddesses themselves,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvii. 15.<sup>2</sup> Acts x. 38.<sup>3</sup> Mark v. 9.<sup>4</sup> Luke viii. 2; Mark xvi. 9.<sup>5</sup> Rev. i. 4; Testam. Rub.<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. x. 20.<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 4.

which were worshipped through and in these images, were no other than malignant demons. In Revelations<sup>1</sup> we have the same opinion.

Paul's list of the functions of demons is not yet exhausted. For in his first Epistle to Timothy<sup>2</sup> we have recorded yet another mode of the sinister activity of the devils. "In the last times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of *devils*, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies." The demons then were responsible not only for sin and disease, but for false doctrine as well.

Let us now consider the relation of Jesus the Messiah to this kingdom of evil. Firstly, he was not alone or singular in his power of casting out devils. Prior to his advent the Jews were not without resources in combating the demons. In Acts<sup>3</sup> we hear of strolling Jews who were exorcists, but who had never heard of the name of Jesus. And in the Epistle to the Ephesians<sup>4</sup>, where we get more than one peep into the demonological beliefs of St. Paul, we hear of "every name that is named," not only in this world, but in that also which is to come—the reference being, of course, to the use in exorcisms of names of angels and patriarchs. In the Gospels<sup>5</sup> also we have an attestation by Jesus himself of the fact that his Jewish contemporaries could, like himself, cast out devils. "If I by Beelzebul cast out devils, by whom do your sons (i. e. Jews in general) cast them out?" But the Messiah claimed to be no common exorcist, and the demons knew him at sight as their appointed destroyer<sup>6</sup>. He came and entered the house of the strong man Satan, and was stronger than he. He took from Satan all the armour in which he trusted; he bound him, and spoiled his house and his goods<sup>7</sup>. He suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. With authority

<sup>1</sup> Rev. ix. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xix. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Eph i. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xi. 19; Matt. xii. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Mark i. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xii. 29; Luke xi. 21.

he commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him<sup>1</sup>. The unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him<sup>2</sup>, and cried, saying, "Thou art the Son of God." That it was only by the good leave of Jesus that the Gadarene legion even entered the swine, is good evidence of the authority he wielded over their fraternity.

As to the conditions under which and methods by which Jesus cast out devils, we learn the following details from the New Testament.

The Jews declared that he cast them out with the help of Beelzebul, the prince of the devils. Jesus, however, declared that it was with the finger<sup>3</sup> or by the spirit<sup>4</sup> of God that he did it, and argued that the kingdom of God was therefore come unto them. His procedure was usually to rebuke the spirit and peremptorily to order it to come out. "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him<sup>5</sup>." And this is the method referred to by Matthew in the verse: "He cast out the spirits *with a word*, and healed all who were sick."

He made no use, therefore, of magical herbs. Sometimes, however, physical contact with the victim was requisite; thus, he simply laid his hands on the woman whom Satan had bound together for eighteen years. The method of peremptory rebuke was not confined to what we should call mental cases, for Jesus rebuked the fever<sup>6</sup>. Yet he seems on the whole to have reserved it for violent demons, and Simon's wife's mother was probably delirious. "Be thou muzzled and depart," was often Jesus' form of rebuke.

This power over devils Jesus delegated to his disciples; and some of the apostles, e. g. Paul, could not only expel devils, but hand over people to the Devil for the destruction of their flesh<sup>7</sup>. Paul himself so delivered the heretics Hymenaeus and Alexander unto Satan<sup>8</sup>, that they might learn not to blaspheme. The Devil or Demon was, it would

Jesus delegated his power to disciples and believers.

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Mark iii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xi. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xii. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Mark ix. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Luke iv. 39.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. v. 5.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. i. 20.

seem, inducted into the body of a person so handed to Satan. But there was still a chance for his spirit to be saved<sup>1</sup>.

"Jesus," we read, "called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness<sup>2</sup>." In spite of this, we read that they could not expel the violent dumb demon from a lunatic, because of their unbelief<sup>3</sup>. Belief then on the part of the exorcist, and even prayer and fasting, was needful in order to expel this particular kind of demon. According to Mark<sup>4</sup>, belief on the part of the *father* of the lunatic was also a condition of the cure. "If thou canst believe," said Jesus to him, "all things are possible to him that believeth, and straightway the father of the child cried out, Lord, I believe." In the appendix of Mark we read that it was one of the signs which should follow them that believed, that they should cast out devils and speak with tongues<sup>5</sup>. The sick also were to recover when they laid hands on them.

In expelling devils Jesus himself does not seem to have invoked any name, not even his own, though he claimed to do it by the spirit or finger of God. But already during his lifetime we hear of unauthorized persons, who followed not with his disciples<sup>6</sup>, casting out devils in the name of Jesus; and this not without his approval. At a later time, however, the sons of Sceva paid dearly for taking a similar liberty. "They took upon them to call over them which had evil spirit the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Horae Hebr.* (vol. I, p. 505), remarks: 'Traditio hominis Satanae gravissima omnium poena erat . . . Primo enim Corpus illud quod Spiritus Sancti habitaculum esse deberet, Satanae Spiritusque immundi habitatio fit: Secundo, hominis membra non aliter aguntur a Daemone, quam si eadem ipse animae instar animaret,' &c.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xvii. 19, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Mark ix. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Mark xvi. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Mark ix. 38.

evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them<sup>1</sup>." The disciples themselves were to use the name of Jesus.

Use of name of Jesus. "In my name shall they cast out devils." This power indeed was the first of the signs which were to accompany them that believed<sup>2</sup>. "Behold, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy," we read in Luke, who, like the author of the appendix of Mark, ranks immunity from snake-bite along with the power over demons. "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us *in thy name*," say the seventy to Jesus, when they returned with joy. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" said Peter to the lame man<sup>3</sup>. "And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength." And Peter, in the same context, explains the power: "By faith in the name (of Jesus) hath Jesus' name made this man strong."

Recapitulation. Let us now recapitulate the chief demonological ideas which underlie the New Testament.

(1) The world is full of evil demons presided over by Satan. Without flesh or bones, they hover in the air or haunt the earth, especially its waterless places and the neighbourhood of tombs.

(2) They cause in man all sin and disease and death. They are ever tempting man and plotting his ruin. They enter into his body, and there live as a second soul or spirit. They displace his mind and cause madness; or they affect his body and produce disease. To be sick is to have a devil inside one. To be cured is to have it cast out. The exorcist is the physician, and the physician the exorcist. We hear of a fever-demon, of demons of deafness, dumbness, blindness, paralysis. They are, some of them, impure or unclean; some of them only wicked and lying spirits. Wind and waves also are demoniacal agencies<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xvi. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Acts iii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Mark iv. 39.

(3) They are, as a rule, invisible, but have their own names, and express themselves through the bodily actions and voice of their victims.

(4) They will pass from one person to another, and from human beings into animals. Such transitions are effected by them with great violence. They rend the person they leave, and drive their new hosts into frenzy and destruction.

(5) The chief mission of the Messiah was to rid mankind of these pests; to dethrone Satan, and overcome disease and death. When this triumph over the demons is effected, the kingdom of God will be established.

(6) The Messiah gave to his twelve disciples and to the seventy, the same authority to cast out demons and carry on the war with Satan which he himself possessed.

(7) Before the advent of the Messiah, the Jews knew names, at the naming of which over the possessed, the demons took to flight. But Jesus of Nazareth authorized his followers to use no name but his own.

(8) As a weapon against demons, the name of Jesus was immensely more effective than any other. So Paul<sup>1</sup> declared that God "highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."

(9) The demons were expelled by the mere word of mouth, by the peremptory command of Jesus. His followers, however, had to bid them depart "in or by the name of Jesus." For the preposition ἐν, "in," has the Hebrew sense in this phrase of "by means of" or "through."

(10) Faith on the part of the victim and bystanders in the power of Jesus to expel evil spirits was, as a rule, necessary to a cure, and Jesus himself was impeded by any want of such faith in himself. Nevertheless, even in his lifetime, some without believing in him used his name successfully against demons. Faith was therefore not in-

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 10.

dispensable in the exorcist, though a power over demons went with, and was conferred by, faith.

(11) The gods of idolatrous Gentiles are no other than demons. They are real supernatural agencies, but evil ones.

(12) The demons inspire erroneous teachings within the circle of Christian believers.

(13) They haunt even the churches in which the faithful are met for worship, and in the synagogues possessed persons were to be met with.

(14) The demons were angels which rebelled and were cast out of heaven. Christ when he comes to judge the world will condemn them to torments in hell. This the demons knew, and accordingly dreaded the approach of Christ, whom they instantly recognized.

(15) The demons are often found in groups of seven.

(16) Any number of them at once may possess a man.

(17) Meats offered to idols are not to be touched, nor things strangled, the idea being that the blood being the life of the animal is the proper food for devils. Men by partaking of it would be feeding along with demons.

(18) The word "exorcist" already appears in the Acts of the Apostles, but in connexion with Jews only. There is, however, no reason to suppose that the disciples would have disclaimed the name. In Matthew<sup>1</sup> the verb ἐξορκίζω is used, but not in connexion with an evil spirit: "I adjure thee by the living God, to tell us if thou art the Christ, the Son of God." Exorcism of a demon was but a particular case of adjuration. We may say then that the term "exorcism" is already present in the New Testament in the sense in which later church writers use it, which sense is thus defined by Isidore: "Exorcismus est sermo increpationis contra immundum Spiritum in energuminis sive catechumenis factus, per quem ab illis diaboli nequissima virtus et inveterata malitia vel excursio violenta fugetur" (Isidore, *de Divin. Offic.* ii. 20).

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 63.



Now the question arises, what is the right interpretation of this demonological strain so manifoldly inwoven not only in the historical but also in the epistolary and prophetic books of the New Testament?

(1) Shall we in the spirit of modern enlightenment deny the reality of evil spirits, and declare that the cases which Jesus healed were merely cases of cerebral and bodily disease? If this be admitted, it remains to ask:

(a) Was Jesus aware of the real nature of the evils he cured, and did he merely adopt the popular opinion in conversation and argument as a concession to the ignorance of the people he was among? or (b) was he immersed in the popular, but mistaken and somewhat barbarous, beliefs of his age and country?

(2) Or shall we take quite another view, and hold that there were really demons at work in the time of Jesus, true satanical beings arrayed as an army for the destruction of men's bodies and souls?

And on this other chief alternative position, if it be accepted, it follows to ask:

(a) Was this activity of demons limited to the period of Jesus' ministry? or (b) did it continue after his departure from among us, and does it still go on?

Of the leaders of religious thought within the orthodox church of the present day, some accept the first of our two alternatives, others the second.

Among the former are Dean Milman and Dean Farrar.

The latter writes as follows: "Among the most frequent of his (Jesus') cures were those of the distressing forms of mental and nervous malady which we ascribe to purely natural causes, but which the ancient Jews, like all Orientals, attributed to direct supernatural agency<sup>1</sup>." "The Jews, like most ancient nations,

Views of  
modern  
divines.

Dean  
Farrar's  
views.

<sup>1</sup> Farrar, *Life of Christ*, ch. 23.

attributed every result immediately to the action of demons<sup>1</sup>."

This being Farrar's view, it is a pity that he does not further instruct his readers as to whether or no Jesus was "like all Orientals," in being himself imbued with this primitive belief. But Dean Farrar scents the dilemma into which this view might lead him. If Jesus was "like all Orientals" in this respect, how was he the omniscient son of God? If he knew better and only simulated the common belief, what becomes of his honesty? Accordingly Dean Farrar leaves himself a loophole, and writes as follows: "If indeed we could be sure that Jesus directly encouraged or sanctioned in men's mind the belief that the swine were indeed driven wild by the unclean spirits which passed objectively from the body of the Gadarene into the bodies of these dumb beasts, then we could, without hesitation, believe as a literal truth, however incomprehensible, that so it was." "But this," he adds, "by no means follows indisputably from *what we know of the methods of the evangelists*" (Farrar, ch. 23).

But what is the fact? Three evangelists distinctly aver that Jesus did directly encourage and sanction in men's minds such a belief, and they aver it also in a perfectly naïve and straightforward narrative. Is it then the method of the evangelists "to say one thing and mean another?" According to Dean Farrar it is their method.

On the other hand, Canon Gore accepts the second alternative of the reality of demonological possession, both in the age of Jesus and in our own.

He is far from accepting Dean Farrar's position, that the question is one to which there attaches no vital importance. "The question," he writes, "of diabolic agency and temptation is one which really concerns the permanent religious struggle of mankind. . . . It is a matter of profoundly practical religious interest."

<sup>1</sup> Farrar, *Life of Christ*, ch. 17.

With admirable concision Mr. Gore says of Jesus that "he deals with demons with unmistakable seriousness, emphasis, and frequency. He sees Satan behind moral and physical evil." "Our Lord's language," he says, "reaches the level of positive teaching about good, and still more about bad, spirits." He goes on to declare it to be "impossible for Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, yet more as the spiritual teacher of mankind, to teach ignorantly on such a matter or to inculcate false impressions about it, or to connive in regard to it at popular belief and language."

There is yet the third view akin to Mr. Gore's, viz. that demons did exist during the ministry and age of Jesus, but not before or after. And Dean Farrar<sup>1</sup> in a note leaves a corner of his hospitable mind open for the reception, in case of necessity, of this half-view. "I am not prepared to deny that in the dark and desperate age which saw the Redeemer's advent there may have been forms of madness which owed their more immediate manifestation to evil powers." So the writer of the article on Demonology in the last edition of the *Dictionary of the Bible* broaches the view that in the age of Jesus demons really existed and manifested themselves, but only for the nonce, and in order that Jesus and his immediate followers might have them to cast out.

Instead of trying at once to decide between these rival views, it will be best to glance, first, at the subsequent history of demonological belief within the early Church itself; secondly, at the history of the belief outside the pale of Christianity. (1) Among the Jews before the age of Christ. (2) Among the Jews during and after that age. (3) Among the Greeks, the so-called pagans. (4) Among the ancient Assyrians and Persians. (5) Among primitive men and savages. Then we shall have oriented ourselves, and shall be in a position to pronounce upon the merits of the several views of Canon Gore, Dean Farrar, and others.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Christ*, ch. 23.

Within the Christian Church.

The earliest extra canonical documents of the Church contain little that bears upon our inquiry. The Demons in the early Church. teaching of the twelve apostles has no precepts concerning demons, neither has the first epistle of Clement. Barnabas<sup>1</sup> in the epistle which is ascribed to him, and which cannot have been written much later than 100 A. D., exhorts us to exert ourselves lest the "black one" (ὁ μέλας) should get a chance of creeping into us. Towards the close of his epistle<sup>2</sup>, he says that the path of the "black one" is crooked and full of cursing. The heart full of idolatry, he says elsewhere<sup>3</sup>, is the abode of demons; and he contrasts<sup>4</sup> with the light-bringing angels of God the angels of Satan, who is ruler of this present season of wickedness.

In Ignatius' epistles the references to Satan as the prince of this world are very frequent. His "ancient kingdom" was pulled down when God appeared in the likeness of man<sup>5</sup>. The martyr felt that "the envy of the devil, just because it was unseen by many, waged against him the fiercer war." Of actual possession we have no mention in his pages; but in Smyrneans<sup>6</sup> he says that the demons are bodiless (ἄσώματοι), and he quotes from a lost Gospel the words of the risen Jesus: "Lay hold and handle me, and see that I am not a demon without a body." "And straightway," he adds, "the apostles touched him, and they believed, being joined unto his flesh and blood."

In holding this belief Ignatius moved in the same circle of opinion as St. Luke; but in that he never refers to cases of possession he approximates to St. John, who, again in this respect as in others, is as it were a connecting-link between the Synoptic Gospels and the more philosophic

<sup>1</sup> Ep. iv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xx. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xvi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xviii. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ign. Eph. 17 and 19; Magn. 1; Trall. 4, Rom. 7; Philad. 6; Eph. 19; ibid. Trall. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Smyrn. 2; ibid. 3.

Judaism of Alexandria, of which Philo is our sole surviving representative. Ignatius wrote before A.D. 120. Perhaps before that year, and certainly not more than ten years later, we have quite a philosophy of possession, not by demons only but by the Holy Spirit as well, in the Shepherd of Hermas.

As in the twelve testaments, so in this writer, even purely moral forms of evil are demons. Thus, evil speaking (*καταλαλιά*) is "a restless demon, never at peace<sup>1</sup>." So "quick-temper" (*ὀξύχολία*) is an evil spirit (*πονηρὸν πνεῦμα*). The *ὀξύχολος* or man who is quick-tempered is "filled with evil spirits; he is unstable in all his acts, and is dragged hither and thither by the evil spirits<sup>2</sup>." In Italy, where Hermas wrote, the passionate and vindictive temper of the inhabitants must have been a great obstacle to the progress of Christian love and charity. Elsewhere<sup>3</sup> Hermas speaks of the angels of wickedness going up into a man's heart, and contrasts the angel of justice, who is *τρυφερός* or soft and subtle—*tenerrimus*, as the old Latin version renders the word. The same epithet is often applied to the Holy Spirit of God. Another evil spirit is Sorrow. Sorrow (*λύπη*) is indeed said to be more evil than any other spirit. Another demon, called Lust (*ἐπιθυμία*), is daughter of the Devil<sup>4</sup>. Nor is Hermas, when he holds such language, impersonating abstract qualities in a merely rhetorical fashion. On the contrary, these passions are vaporous agencies, capable of physical and material action and reaction on each other and on the Holy Spirit, which in its composition resembles them. So it is that in several passages he represents the heart as a vessel (*ἀγγεῖον*), into which the Holy Spirit and the evil spirits may alike enter and dwell<sup>5</sup>. Not one but several evil spirits at once may remain in a man as in a single vessel. The vase in question cannot hold them all, but runs over. And then the Holy Spirit being *τρυφερόν* or very soft, since it is not accustomed to inhabit along

<sup>1</sup> Herm. Mand. ii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 2, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. v. 1, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xii. 2, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. v. 1, 2.

with an evil spirit, . . . departs out of such a man and seeks to live with Gentleness and Quiet. Elsewhere, he says, "the Demon of Sorrow squeezes out (*ἐκτρίβει*) the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>. But if a man be *μακρόθυμος* or long-suffering, the Holy Spirit, which dwells in him, remains pure, and is not dimmed and obscured by the presence along with it of an evil spirit<sup>2</sup>;" but "dwelling in a broad space it will rejoice and be glad, as will also the vase (of the soul) within which it dwells. . . . But if quick-temper approach, then the Holy Spirit, being soft, is at once pressed for room, and not finding the place clean, seeks to get away out of it. For it is suffocated (*πνίγεται*) by the evil spirit, and has no room to pray and to worship (*λειτουργῆσαι*) the Lord, as it fain would do, for it is polluted by the companionship of quick-temper. Thus, both the spirits are dwelling in the same place; and that man in whom they are doing so, experiences great inconvenience and evil. It is," he goes on to explain, "just as if one poured wormwood upon honey. The Devil and arch-tempter<sup>3</sup> will, however, depart out of a man who is full of faith, because he finds no room to make his way in. Evil spirits<sup>4</sup> are earthly and vacuous; and the reason why a false prophet is dumb, when confronted with a congregation of people filled with the spirit of the deity, is that the earthly spirit which was in him takes to flight and runs away, leaving him dumb and shattered, unable to say anything."

To the use of the name in exorcism we find no express reference in the Shepherd; but he implies it when he says that "the great and glorious name<sup>5</sup> is the only refuge from the great dragon, and no one who does not bear it can enter the kingdom of God." There is no mention of the practice of exorcism. Yet we must not infer that the writer was any stranger to a rite, which it did not suit his literary purposes to refer to.

<sup>1</sup> Herm. Mand. x. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xii. 5, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xi. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Vis. iv. 2, 4; Sim. ix. 12, 1.

The Demonology of Justin Martyr—who wrote nearly  
 Justin within a hundred years of the death of Jesus,  
 Martyr. and whose life may have overlapped that of  
 St. John, is the same as that of the Gospels, only more  
 fully thought out and elaborated. He in fact recites and  
 explains at length conceptions and beliefs which the Gospels  
 simply assume. The demons so-called are, he says<sup>1</sup>, the  
 offspring of the angels who yielded to the embraces of  
 earthly women and begat children. They have enslaved  
 men ever since by magic writings, by fears and threats of  
 penalties, and by teaching them to sacrifice and offer incense  
 and libations, of which they stood in need. But possession  
 is due not only to these demons, but also to the souls of  
 dead people, which, after death, still have consciousness  
 (*αἰσθησις*), and take hold of men and throw them convul-  
 sively about<sup>2</sup>. (Here, then, we have an explanation of why  
 the Gadarene demoniac was driven among the tombs.) The  
 ruler<sup>3</sup> of the evil demons is called Serpent, Satan, and  
 Devil. They appear to men, making epiphanies (*ἐπιφανεῖας*)<sup>4</sup>,  
 and they terrify them into believing that they are gods.  
 Then men build temples and put up statues into which the  
 devils enter to abide. The gods of the heathen accordingly  
 are evil demons, and wield a real supernatural influence  
 over mankind. The demons<sup>5</sup> assume what names they  
 like among their votaries, and by their foul actions go  
 far to justify the fables about themselves to which the  
 heathen give credit. Nor is it only the myths of the heathen  
 which are due to them; for they equally inspire heretical  
 opinions among Christians<sup>6</sup>, in particular those of Simon  
 Magus and Menander<sup>7</sup>. They even try to prevent men  
 from reading the Scriptures which contain the message of  
 salvation. Their one aim in fine<sup>8</sup> is to lead away men from  
 God the Creator and his firstborn son Christ.

And herein Justin discovers the true rationale of perse-

<sup>1</sup> Apol. ii. 44 B.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. i. 65 B.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. i. 71 A.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. i. 55 E.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. ii. 44 C; Ibid. i. 67 D.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. i. 69 D.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 91 B.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 61 A; ibid. 92 B.

cutions. For it is the demons who instigate rulers to persecute the faithful; driving the said rulers on with irrational passion as with a whip<sup>1</sup>. And this not in the present age alone. For it was they who long ago instigated the Greeks to kill Socrates<sup>2</sup>, charging him falsely with introducing new gods, merely because he dissuaded men from the service of devils.

However in the end these unholy demons will be imprisoned and punished with eternal fire, as Jesus and the prophets have foretold. And even in the present age Christians<sup>3</sup> are not left without relief from the demons, since these are worsted by the name of Jesus Christ, which they, in common with all other principalities and powers<sup>4</sup>, dread more than any other name of the dead. "We call him<sup>5</sup> (Jesus) our helper and redeemer, for at the power of his name even the demons tremble; and to-day when they are exorcised by the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, . . . they cower, yield, and are subject; and so it is proved clearly to all that his father gave him so much power as that even the demons were subdued by his name and by the economy of his passion." So, elsewhere<sup>6</sup>, after quoting the text, "I give unto you power to trample on serpents and scorpions and skolopenders and over all power of the enemy" (Luke x. 19), Justin adds: "And we now (*καὶ νῦν*), who believe in Jesus our Lord, crucified under Pontius Pilate, exorcise all the demons and evil spirits and have them in subjection to ourselves. Later in the same dialogue<sup>7</sup> Justin invites the unbelieving Jews to consider the results achieved under their very eyes by the faithful." "For," he declares, "by means of the name of this very Son of God and firstborn of all creation, who was born of a virgin and became passible man, and was under Pontius Pilate crucified and so died, but rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven, any and every demon is conquered and subdued."

<sup>1</sup> Apol. i. 55 D.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 56 A; Ibid. ii. 48 D.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. ii. 46 D.<sup>4</sup> Dial. 350 B.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 247 C.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 301 E.<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 311 B.



Here then we have the full formula of exorcism used by Christians in Justin's day, and we see that it was calculated to fully instruct the demons about the superior being in whose name they were challenged to quit the possessed.

To the Roman Senate, in his second Apology, Justin addresses a like appeal<sup>1</sup>. "Jesus," he says, "became man to save believers and overthrow the Demons." That in the belief of this apologist was the great aim and result of the Saviour's ministry. "And in the present time (*καὶ νῦν*)," he says, "you can learn from what is going on under your eyes. For many of our people, to wit of the Christians, have healed and still heal many possessed by demons both all over the world and in this your city, exorcising them by the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate—and this after all *other* exorcists and charmers and medicine-men have failed to heal them. For we break the power of the demons that possess men and chase them out." And, in arguing with the Jews, Justin declares<sup>2</sup>, that exorcise as they might by every name of kings or of just men or of patriarchs, yet no one of the demons was subject to them as to Christians. He admits, however, in the same context that the demons would probably submit to a Jew, who should exorcise them in the name of the God of Abraham, and God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. We see, then, that Justin still accords to the Jews the power to get rid of demons which Jesus in his days had acknowledged that they possessed.

Justin's conception of the mission of Jesus is thus very simple. He came among men to free them from the rule of demons, and his name is a more powerful weapon than any other to drive them off. For the rest the use of *the Name* among Christians is the same as in the practice of exorcism in general.

Justin represents Samaria and Ephesus in the first half of the second century. Turn we next to Irenaeus, who represents the Christianity of Asia Minor and Gaul in the latter half of the same century. He, like

<sup>1</sup> Apol. ii. 45 A.

<sup>2</sup> Dial. 311 C.

Justin, acknowledges the antiquity and effectiveness of exorcisms other than Christian. By the Invocation, he declares<sup>1</sup>, of the most high and almighty God men were saved before the advent of our Lord from the most wicked spirits, from all demons and from general apostasy. This, not because the demons had *seen* God, but because, as St. James says, they knew that he existed. He testifies that in his day the Jews still routed demons by pronouncing the name of him who made all things (*hac ipsa affatione*). The same writer, in another very striking passage<sup>2</sup>, bears witness to some very extraordinary facts, as follows :

“In his (viz. Jesus’) name his true disciples, having received grace from him, fulfil works of benevolence unto the rest of mankind, according to the several gifts they have each from him received. For some drive out devils lastingly and truly, with the result that often the very persons who have been purged of the evil spirits believe and become members of the church. Others have actually a foreknowledge of the future, and visions and prophetic utterances. Others again heal the sick by the laying on of hands and restore them to health. And ere now, as we said, even the dead have been raised and have remained with us for many years.” “All these works are in the church performed,” this Father goes on to assure us, “by the free and unpurchased grace of God, and not by invocation of angels or incantations or other depraved methods of magic. It is alone needful for the faithful to send up a prayer cleanly, purely, and openly to the Lord, who made all things, and to invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is abundantly clear from these passages of Justin and Irenaeus that the same belief in demons and the same methods of exorcising them prevailed both among the Christians and among the Jews, throughout the second century, as were in vogue in the age of Jesus and his disciples. One by one the several

<sup>1</sup> Iren. ii. 4, 6 (Ed. Harvey i. p. 264).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Haer. ii. 49, 3 (Harvey i. p. 375).

characteristics of the New Testament Demonology may be identified and exemplified in the personal beliefs and experiences of Justin and Irenaeus; and whatever reality appertained to the demons expelled by Jesus must be acknowledged to equally belong to those which these Fathers saw driven out.

And here, perhaps, before I pass on to the views of the  
 Acts of earliest Latin Father, Tertullian, it may not be  
 Pilate. out of place to quote the quaint recipe for driving  
 away an evil spirit, which is preserved in the Acts of  
 Pilate or so-called Gospel of Nicodemus. This is a very  
 early document, relating the story of the trial and cruci-  
 fixation; and was almost certainly in the hands of Tertullian,  
 if not of Justin. Indeed it seems to belong to an age and  
 circle in which the legend of the miraculous birth of Jesus  
 had not as yet arisen. The very account of the first  
 appearance of the risen Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea on  
 the Saturday night must have been written before the four  
 Gospels became canonical, for it is in flagrant contradiction  
 with all of them. Joseph, as a follower of Jesus, had been  
 imprisoned by the Jews late on the Friday night, on the  
 day of the crucifixion. "And about the middle of the next  
 night, after the full Sabbath was expired, I was standing  
 up, he relates, and was praying, when the building in  
 which you confined me was suspended by its four corners,  
 and I saw as it were a flash of light before my eyes. And  
 in terror I fell on the ground. And some one took hold of  
 my hand, and removed me from the spot where I was  
 fallen, and a spray of water was shed over me from head  
 to feet and a smell of myrrh came unto my nostrils. And  
 having wiped my face he kissed me and said to me,  
 'Fear not, Joseph, open thine eyes and see who it is that  
 speaks to thee.' And I looked up and saw Jesus, and was  
 afraid, for I thought it was a phantasm, and so began to  
 repeat the commandments, and he repeated them along with  
 me. And, as ye are well aware, a phantasm if it meet with  
 any one and hear the commandments flees precipitately."

I believe that a ghost may still be routed by reciting to it the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments. Perhaps this passage of the Acts of Pilate is hardly pertinent to my theme, but I have thought it well to quote it. For it well illustrates the passage in the Gospels according to which the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea and thought that it was an apparition. It equally well illustrates, while it contradicts, the various apparitions of the risen Christ related in the New Testament. Lastly, it is curiously like Mrs. Besant's account of the nocturnal appearance to her of an Indian Mahatma, who "like all Mahatmas smelt stongly of sandalwood and Eastern spices."

Similar testimony to Justin's is afforded by Tertullian, who died soon after A.D. 220. "We sacrifice," Tertullian. he says<sup>1</sup>, "for the good health of the Emperor, but we do so to our God and his, and in the way God enjoined upon us, to wit with pure prayer. For God, the founder of the Universe, wants no odour of blood of victims. For these are the food of demons (*daemoniorum pabula*). But we not only repudiate demons, but we also overcome and repel them, and day by day we expose them and drive them out of men, as every one well knows."

There is hardly any man who has not a demon in him, says elsewhere<sup>2</sup> the same writer, whose writings in a hundred other passages prove how thoroughly imbued the North African congregations were with the belief in demons, and what an everyday occurrence exorcism was among them.

Those who would realize how large a space of the mental horizon of a Christian of the late second century the belief in demons occupied, cannot do better than read the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters of Tertullian's Apology and parts of the tract of Minucius Felix. The one reflects the opinion of African, the other that of Roman Christians. "If Christ's divinity," declares Tertullian, "is true and real, because the knowledge of it reforms a man's character;

<sup>1</sup> Ad Scap. 69 c (ed. 1675).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., De Anima, 305 D.

it follows that the divinity which lurks under names and statues of the dead, and gets itself believed divine by certain signs and miracles and oracles, is but a sham divinity. For we admit the existence of spiritual substances (*substantias spirituales*). Nor is the name a new one; since Socrates had a restraining demon within him from childhood, a demon," adds Tertullian, "which doubtless dissuaded him from what was right (*dehortatorium plane a bono*)." Mark here the hostility of the writer to an ancient whom even Justin and Apollonius of Rome felt constrained to reverence, and whom Justin in particular declared to have been inspired by the Word of God. "The poets," continues Tertullian, "knew of demons; and even the untaught vulgar often resorted to the use of the curse or malediction. Plato knew of angels, and the magi asserted the existence both of angels and of demons." We see how in the above Tertullian testifies that the belief in evil spirits was common to Christianity with the more ancient opinions and religions of the world. "In the Holy Scriptures," continues Tertullian, "you can read how out of certain angels corrupted by their own self-will, the still more corrupt race of demons sprang into being." (Here Tertullian refers to the book of Enoch, which he believed to have been really written before the Flood<sup>1</sup>, and to be rightly accepted by Christians as a prophecy of Christ. "The Holy Spirit," he says elsewhere<sup>2</sup>, "foretold all these things through the most ancient prophet Enoch.") "Now the entire activity of these demons is directed to the overthrow of mankind; and that is why they inflict on our body illness and physical calamities, and on our soul sudden and through their violence extraordinary fits of madness (*excessus*). Their peculiar subtilty and thinness (*subtilitas et tenuitas sua*) enables them to assail both body and mind of man; their spiritual powers enable them to do much, to operate mischief with energies unseen and unfelt, save

<sup>1</sup> De Cultu Fem. i. 3 (151 A).

<sup>2</sup> De Idol. xv (95 A).

in their baneful results; as when some hidden blight in the breeze, hurries forward fruit and grain in flower; then nips them in the bud or blasts them in their maturity; or as when they mysteriously contaminate the air we breathe, so that it spreads pestilence among us. With the same obscure contagion, the breath (*adspiratio*) of angels and demons vitiates the mind, and goads it into madness or cruel lusts along with diverse errors; the most prevalent of which is that by which they get the minds of men so enthralled and deluded to believe in your gods, a belief into which they bewitch us in order to obtain the diet which alone suits them (*pabula propria*) of reek and blood, of sacrifices slain in honour of their effigies and images, and (what is a more acceptable banquet to them) to turn mankind aside from reflecting on the true divinity by the deceptions of false divination." "Let me point out," continues Tertullian, "how they produce these results. Every spirit has wings. This is true of angels and demons alike. Therefore they are everywhere in a trice. The whole world is as one spot to them; and they can learn and announce to us with equal ease what is going on, no matter where." Hence the wonders of false divination. "Because we do not know their real nature, we take their quickness for a mark of divinity. Often the demons foretell evils, and themselves wish to seem the authors of the same; for they often have ill-tidings to announce, but never good. They stole the counsels of God from the prophets of old, and even to-day when we read the prophets in church they are eavesdropping. This is how they ape true divinity. And they ingeniously frame their oracles to suit either event, oracles fraught with woe to the Croesuses and Pyrrhuses of old."

Then<sup>1</sup> follows a passage which reveals to us how old are such superstitions as spirit-rapping and table-turning: "The magicians," he says, "call up ghosts (*phantasmata*), and dishonour the souls of those long dead; they smother

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 23.

young boys to make them gasp out oracles; they play off marvels with the trickery of jugglers; they cause men to dream dreams, since they have to help them the power of the angels, whom they summon, and of the demons, through whose agency both goats and tables (*mensae*) are wont to guess secrets (*divinare*). . . . Since both angels and demons can work the same results as your gods, what," he asks, "becomes of the vaunted superiority of your gods? Are they more than demons, these gods of yours?"

We should note in the above two points, firstly, that Tertullian believed even the angels of God to be at the disposition of magicians. They had to come if properly invoked (*invitati*). Secondly, he believed goats and tables to be really inspired.

The conclusion which Tertullian urges is that there is no real godhead behind the beliefs of pagans, but only devils; and he points in proof thereof to the dominion and power over the ancient gods which Christians had by merely naming Christ, and enumerating to the demons the tortures which Christ the judge would in the end inflict on them. Dreading Christ in God and God in Christ, they render obedience to the servants of God and of Christ. "So it is," he declares, "that they flee from our *touch and our blowing on them* (*de contactu deque afflatu*), overwhelmed by the contemplation and representation of the fire in store for them. Yea, they quit men's bodies at our command before your eyes with bad grace and reluctantly, and blushing with shame of themselves because of your presence."

What a glimpse we have here of the practical Christianity of the second century. The exorcist standing or kneeling over the prostrate form of a demoniac, touching it, blowing on it, as Jesus blew on his disciples, reciting perhaps the while from the book of Enoch the judgments in store for evil spirits, when their hour shall come.

"But enough of words," exclaims Tertullian, "I can give you, if you will, an ocular demonstration that your gods are mere devils under another name. Let any one be

brought forward before your tribunals, who is admittedly driven on by a demon. Let any Christian you like command the evil spirit to speak, and it will at once own that it is really but a demon, though in other places it falsely pretends to be a god. In the same way let there be produced one of those whom you believe to be under the influence of a god (*de Deo pati*), one of those who, by inhaling the fumes of the altars, have conceived the godhead (*numen*), and who are bent double with belching as they pant out their prophecies. Choose your virgin Caelestis who promises rain, or Aesculapius himself. If these do not at once confess to being demons, because they do not dare to lie to a Christian, then cut the throat of that Christian on the spot for his insolence. What test," he asks, "could be more open and conclusive<sup>1</sup>: there would be no room left for suspicion." It would be nice to know whether a pagan judge ever accepted Tertullian's challenge; and if so, what was the result of so memorable a séance.

In the apology of Minucius Felix, entitled Octavius, we have an account of the demons so akin to that of Tertullian, that critics are divided as to whether Felix had read Tertullian or Tertullian Felix. Just as the one reflects Carthaginian opinion in the second century, so the other, Felix, the scene of whose dialogue is laid at Ostia, reflects that of Rome. The origin of all error and depravity is, says Felix (ch. 26), to be traced to the activity of demons, impure spirits who roam around, exiled from heaven and from the strength which heaven gives, by the stains of earth and by their lusts. These spirits, immersed in vices, are borne downwards by the weight of their sins, and have lost the simpleness of their substance (*simplicitatem substantiae*). Ruined natures, they seek to solace themselves by ruining others and alienating men from God—as they themselves are alienated—by spreading among them false religions. These spirits the poets called demons. Socrates

<sup>1</sup> A hundred years later we find St. Athanasius (*de Incarn.* 48, § 15) renewing the challenge.



recognized their existence and had one dwelling within him, at whose beck and call he acted or declined to act. The magicians (*magi*) not only are familiar with demons, but by their means work all their miracles. Ostanes, leader and spokesman of these magicians (or *magi*), who taught truly about God and his angels, represented the demons as beings earthy, vagrant and inimical to mankind (*terrenos, vagos, humanitatis inimicos*). Plato, who esteemed it a difficult business to find God, tells us about angels and demons. In his *Symposium* he attempts to define the nature of demons. Their substance is halfway between mortal and immortal, between body and spirit, concreted of earthy heaviness and heavenly lightness. Of such a substance was Eros or love formed, so that he could glide into human breasts and stir the feelings. These impure spirits, as the magicians and philosophers have shown, lurk under cover of statues and images, and by their afflatus win the authority as it were of present godhead. At the same time they insinuate themselves into priests, as they hang about the fanes. They also at times animate the entrails of the slain victims so that the muscles twitch; they govern the flight of the birds, rule the lots, and fabricate oracles, in which they mix up a little truth with a great deal of falsehood. For they are themselves deceived and deceive others; for they either do not know the pure truth; or, if they do, will not confess it to their own destruction. Thus they weigh men down from heaven and call them away from God to material concerns. They disturb our life, and break up our sleep; and creeping into our bodies—secretly, for they are attenuated spirits—they produce diseases, scare our minds, and distort our limbs, all this in order to drive us to worship them, and to get the reputation of having cured us, when in fact they have only relaxed the limbs they had themselves cramped, because they are glutted with the reek of altars and blood of cattle. Then Felix relates how the demons owned to being demons, when the Christians drove them out of

men's bodies with torments recited and burnings invoked upon them (*tormentis verborum et orationis incendiis*). Saturn himself, and Serapis and Jupiter, and all the other demons worshipped, could be thus overcome by pain and made to declare their true nature. They never lied about their foulness, especially if their worshippers were present. "For when adjured by the only true God they give a shudder of misery in the bodies of the possessed; and either leap forth at once or disappear little by little (*exiliunt statim vel evanescent gradatim*), according as the faith of the victim assists or as the grace of the healer is breathed upon him. So it is that the demons flee from Christians at close quarters, though when they are at a safe distance from their meetings, they assail them *through* the Pagans, into whose inexperienced minds they creep, and without showing themselves sow hatred of the Christians whom they dread. For this they seize upon men's minds and blockade their hearts; so that they begin to hate the Christians before ever they know them, or if they know them are prevented from imitating those whom yet they cannot condemn."

From such passages as these we can judge how firm a hold the older beliefs still had upon the Christians of the first three centuries. All the gods of the Greek and Roman mythology were supernatural and real, only malignant, beings. Still clearer is it that the practice of exorcising demons from the sick was as common in the Roman Church of 200 A. D. as it was in Judaea during the ministry of Jesus. The evil spirits still cried aloud and convulsed their victims, when they were cast out, just as they do in the New Testament. And just as they cried out to Jesus that they knew him for the Son of God, and besought him not to torment them, for their day was not yet come; so they avow to the contemporaries of Tertullian and Minucius Felix their real nature and their dread of the fiery torments in store for them. As St. James had put it in his general epistle: "The devils also believe and shudder" (James ii. 19).

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